

# **Christmas Meditation**

## **Friday, December 15, 2023**

On this last Friday eblast meditation before the new year, a question I've been asked often enough over the years is this: How do we celebrate Christmas as followers of Jesus? Let me offer some suggestions:

1) The most obvious way is to participate in gatherings where not only food, but love is shared. This also means connecting with people and providing a welcome for them, especially those for whom the pressure to participate can be a challenge for any number of reasons. How do we make our connections and gatherings accessible? How do we create spaces of time and attention where we really listen to one another, and are even prepared to shed some tears with others and not just laughter and joy? Where are the wounds in relationships around us? How may we participate in a journey of healing with others? Christmas should be a time for healing the whole self and what our selves need from each other is not always the same. Unless we pay attention and listen we will not know how to be good humans toward one another – the very hands, feet, voice and heart of Christ for each other.

2) Volunteering, serving and giving. Where are the needs around us. How can we give and serve as followers of the one who spent his first Christmas in an animal shed with little warmth and food? Where are the stables in our world and in people's hearts? May we travel there this Christmas more intentionally than we may otherwise do.

Some of us may not be able to do this physically (serve a hot meal, volunteer at a food bank, buy some groceries or give some money). But we can make a phone call, check in on someone, offer a little treat so that someone knows they are not forgotten.

Creativity with giving arises when our hearts are stirred by the Spirit. We can also gift people with a donation to an organization or cause they may value or learn about. We can use the Christmas Sabbath time as a time to get educated about all the organizations in our society trying to do good in the world. Our children and grandchildren may get a lot more out of a gift given to some organization that works with children than one more toy or gadget they don't need.

3) Reduce, reuse and simplify. Mother earth is especially taxed during Christmas. All the buying, selling, packaging and consuming are a menace to the health and well-being of our mother earth, sustaining us despite the ways we ignore her needs or abuse her by making of her a dumping ground of garbage and toxicity. Reduce packaging, reuse wrapping and gift bags, try to limit what you throw away, enjoy togetherness that doesn't have to produce waste. Make a resolution to get educated on ways you can reduce your carbon footprint in 2024.

4) Finally, even as Christmas typically involves connecting with lots of people, why not find some time over Christmas to find yourself? I know this may sound cliché in our culture of self-help improvement. But finding yourself as a follower of Jesus is also about discerning what that means at this time of your life. If you cannot find a deeper way to love yourself how can you discern deeper ways you may love others? Others need a whole and healthy spiritual you rather than one scattered, stretched and confused about your purpose and place. Obviously, some of us may be struggling right now for any number of reasons not of our choosing. We need to be compassionate with ourselves and learn how to let ourselves off the hook. Self-care is a path to other-care too. You need to feel ok about taking some intentional time to heal yourself and find time to clear a pathway for yourself toward greater wholeness.

These are just some ways we can make our Christmas Sabbath celebrations this year a little more Christ-like. What ways have you found that have impacted you? What plans do you have? Please share with us.

May you have a blessed Christmas and we look forward to connecting with you any which way that happens.